

Minutes of DAAC Meeting

Attendance

DAAC members present were: Seren Derin, Chair; Joe Tringali, Vice-chair; Irene Barrelet, Clerk; and Jim MacRostie

Others present were Gerry Weiss, Select Board representative; Tom Davies and Peter Root as representatives from the Amherst Inn Co.; and Nathaniel Malloy, DAAC staff liaison.

Absent: Dana Goddard.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Derin called the meeting to order at 3:12 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Committee members noted that the public had contacted them explaining the Citizen Activity Form (CAF) was difficult to access online; completing the form is a requirement if a town resident is interested in serving on a board or committee.

MINUTES

No minutes were reviewed.

NEW BUSINESS

Amherst Inn Co.—Lord Jeffery Inn Renovations

Tom Davies and Peter Root, representatives of the Lord Jeffery Inn Company, presented plans for the renovation and expansion of the Lord Jeffery Inn in downtown Amherst. The project includes renovation of existing overnight rooms, the addition of a ballroom and function space on the ground level, the addition of a new main entrance from Spring Street, and improved accessibility throughout the property. The Inn will not increase the number of overnight rooms, which will remain at 49 rooms, and the original ca. 1928 architectural character will be restored where possible to be eligible for Federal Historic Tax Credits.

The Amherst Inn Co. will be applying to the Architectural Access Board for a variance requesting that three requirements be waived:

1. That the existing entrance from Spring Street remains relatively unchanged as part of the historical fabric of the structure. The entrance is not fully accessible because it has a raised landing and it brings visitors into a stairwell.
2. That an accessible elevator does not reach the top (fourth) floor. The renovation will include a fully accessible elevator that brings visitors up to the third floor; distribution of a sufficient number and type of accessible rooms on the first three levels; and updates to the existing elevator, which although not fully ADA compliant, will service the fourth floor and can be used by most visitors.
3. That the doorways to all overnight rooms do not need to meet the minimum clearance requirement of 32" because of the financial hardship to widen the entrances and reconfigure room layouts of the historic structure.

The Committee agreed by consensus to support the application with the following conditions regarding the three waiver requests:

1. The existing Spring Street entrance can remain unchanged because of the addition of accessible entrances along Boltwood Avenue, Spring Street, and the new entrance in the back will be closer to the new HP parking area and has an accessible path of travel to the public areas, elevators, and hotel rooms. All of these new entrances allow an accessible path of travel throughout the restaurant and guest rooms.
2. It is sufficient that the new elevator provide service only up to the third floor. The existing elevator, although not fully ADA compliant, should be updated as much as possible to make it (partially) accessible. Improvements should at least include lowering/raising controls to the correct height, the addition of Braille controls, and audible signals for the hard of hearing. The new elevator will provide complete access to the other guestrooms, including all of the accessible rooms.
3. The widening of existing doorways where possible to make rooms visitable and the construction of all new doorways to meet the current ADA standards. Existing doorways could be widened with offset hinges and/or the removal of trim work.

The Committee also had the following concerns about the project:

- ~ The addition of street trees along Spring Street will be an additional amenity; however, the trees' roots may exacerbate potential heaving of sidewalks in the future.
- ~ The distance from the ballroom to the bathrooms on the ground floor is lengthy and the most direct route requires navigation of three ramps. The Committee suggested that the project continue looking for alternatives (i.e. converting a coatroom into an accessible unisex bathroom).
- ~ The addition of one more HP parking space in the parking lot, although not required, would better accommodate alumni and guests, especially since the ballroom has a capacity of 200 people.

Master Plan and Accessibility

The Committee agreed to table the discussion when it could be addressed more thoroughly at a future meeting.

Other

Committee Membership

The Committee said that it would be beneficial for prospective member to attend a DAAC meeting, and encouraged interested citizens to attend meetings as they are open to the public.

OLD BUSINESS

Jones Library Parking

The Committee is waiting to schedule a site visit to the library.

Other

The Committee briefly discussed the UMass parking garage and the difficulty of navigating through the garage to find an accessible exit/entrance. It was noted that only the third level of the garage had an accessible ramp to the ground level, while the on the other levels, most of the exits

had stairs. It was also noted that there are few directional signs in the garage indicating the location of accessible entrances and exits.

Next Meeting(s)

Tuesday, March 9, 2010 @ 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday April 6, 2010 @ 3:00 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Nathaniel Malloy, staff liaison